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A REVERIE OF THE FARM

BY MARY ANNABEL FANTON

With original illustrations by R. B. Gruelle.



EVENING IN OCTOBER

R. B. GRUELLE is an American and a western man at that; but it is evident that he has lived and thought outside of Indiana. Perhaps he is not himself the son of a farmer, but it is plain that he knows the beauty of rural life and feels its poetry; and that he knows and loves the south of France. Let these two appreciations be put together, and it is easy to account for the choice of such themes as Mr. Gruelle here shows himself to delight in; and we may imagine him

weaving a little romance about these pictures, as he turns them over retrospectively, and his mind leaves, for the moment, the work of his hands, and goes back to the joy of his heart in the farmer's life, and especially in that life as he saw it, sweetest and best to the eye of artist and poet, far away in Provence.

In beautiful Provence, the sketches seem to say to him, Provence, the land of swelling meadows, hill-side, vineyard and peaceful cattle; the paradise of chil-



AN AUTUMN AFTERNOON

dren and of poets, he imagined that there once lived in the far-away past a boy, fair of face and with beautiful dreamy eyes.

From his birth he had been his mother's joy, and her heart's desire was that, like his dead father, he should keep the farm a model of beauty and the old Provençal name a symbol of thrift and honesty.

But the boy thought otherwise. He was a poet, with a poet's sensuous, thoughtless temperament, and his only happy moments were spent out of sight of the farm, under the wide spreading trees, stretched on the spongy turf; his arms spread out in ecstasy and his face radiant with close, loving contact with nature.

The summer of his coming of age found him more restless and more discontented with his daily life; even the admiring glances thrown him by the dainty Provençal beauties could not lessen his distaste for farm-work or cure him of his ardor for poetical association.



BY HER FAVORITE WINDOW

He dared not tell his project to his dear old mother, and watch the sweet calm vanish from her face at his words, and the faded blue eyes grow dim with tears. It would be better he thought just to slip quietly away, and then, in a few months when all Paris was ringing with his name, he would come back, and, kneeling at her feet, would ask for her forgiveness and her blessing.

At last the day came on which he had planned to set out. As he finally crept down from his loft, bundle in hand, he saw, by her favorite window the crippled form of his mother, resting peacefully in the old arm-chair. The evening sunlight streamed over the bending figure, softly illuminating the pallid strangeness of a peaceful dead face.



RUMINATION